

BIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM TABORA REGION, TANZANIA

R.K. Walton

This paper summarizes the observations made between 1978 and 1981 when the author was employed on soil survey over the whole of Tabora Region. These observations are compared with those of Reynolds (1968) made between 1959 and 1966.

Many of Reynolds' records come from within 20 miles (32 km) of Tabora town. The widening of the recording area to cover the entire region, together with the occurrence of a few new vagrants has meant the addition of a further 53 species to Reynolds' original list. These are given below with an estimation of their status.

The two sets of observations make it possible to identify those species which appear to have experienced an increase or decline in status in the vicinity of Tabora town over the last 20 years. The main trends are summarized and discussed.

ADDITIONAL SPECIES RECORDED 1978-1981

The species listed below all relate to the author's personal observations. Two species, *Platalea leucorodia* Eurasian Spoonbill and *Lamprotornis purpureus* Purple Glossy Starling are apparently new records for Tanzania and written descriptions have accordingly been submitted to the Ornithological Sub-Committee.

The order follows that given in *Birds of East Africa* (Britton 1980). For convenience in comparing with Reynolds' earlier list the Mackworth-Praed & Grant numbers are given in parentheses. For the same reason the assesment of status follows Reynolds (1968) but refers to the whole region rather than to his recording area. The definitions are repeated below:

- R+ Considered to be resident. Definite breeding records.
 R Considered to be resident. Presumed, but not proved, to breed.
 B Breeds, but uncertain whether resident throughout the year.
 B? Probably breeds, but uncertain whether resident throughout the year.
 BM Breeds, but absent for part of the year.
 B?M Probably breeds, but absent for part of the year.
 OB Breeds, but species uncommon in the area.
 F Frequently seen, with no clear-cut seasonal peaks. Includes some species which probably breed but for which there is insufficient evidence to warrant this assumption.
 M Passage migrants and non breeding visitors.
 OM Migrants which appear to be uncommon.
 O Occasional or accidental visitors.
 ?? Status not clear. Includes species that are seldom seen but are probably resident breeding species.

18 (25)	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Greater Cormorant	R
56 (69)	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Eurasian Spoonbill	O
84 (161)	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	Palm-nut Vulture	O
92 (184)	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	OM
94 (182)	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Montague's Harrier	M
101 (159)	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	Bateleur	R
106 (174)	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>	Great Sparrowhawk	??
107 (170)	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	Little Sparrowhawk	R+
114 (138)	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	Steppe Eagle	OM
115 (141)	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>	Lesser Spotted Eagle	M
128 (143)	<i>Hieraaetus pilogaster</i>	African Hawk Eagle	R

130 (149)	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>	Long-crested Eagle	M
143 (134)	<i>Macheiramphus alcinus</i>	Bat Hawk	R
147 (127)	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>	Grey Kestrel	??
199 (239)	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Moorhen	R
231 (267)	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Little Ringed Plover	OM
368 (443)	<i>Poicephalus robustus</i>	Brown-necked Parrot	??
397 (404)	<i>Cuculus gularis</i>	African Cuckoo	??
419 (538)	<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>	Pearl-spotted Owlet	??
444 (636)	<i>Apus apus</i>	Eurasian Swift	M
459 (566)	<i>Colius striatus</i>	Speckled Mousebird	R
475 (473)	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	Woodland Kingfisher	??
499 (459)	<i>Coracias spatulata</i>	Racquet-tailed Roller	R
541 (583)	<i>Lybius melanocephalus</i>	Black-throated Barbet	R
558 (601)	<i>Trachyphonus erythrocephalus</i>	Red and Yellow Barbet	R
566 (608)	<i>Indicator minor</i>	Lesser Honeyguide	R
578 (622)	<i>Campethera abingoni</i>	Golden-tailed Woodpecker	R
594 (629)	<i>Thripias namaquus</i>	Bearded Woodpecker	R
612 (659)	<i>Mirafra africana</i>	Rufous-naped Lark	??
716 (1148)	<i>Nicator chloris</i>	Nicator	??
887 (936)	<i>Hippolais olivetorum</i>	Olive-tree Warbler	OM
928 (792/5)	<i>Bradornis pallidus</i>	Pale Flycatcher	R
935 (799)	<i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i>	Southern Black Flycatcher	R
1004 (1125)	<i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>	Tropical Boubou	R
1059 (1191)	<i>Lamprotornis purpureus</i>	Purple Glossy Starling	O
1082 (1274)	<i>Anthreptes longuemarei</i>	Violet-backed Sunbird	R
1084 (1274)	<i>Anthreptes orientalis</i>	Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird	R
1091 (1261)	<i>Nectarinia amethystina</i>	Amethyst Sunbird	R
1134 (1358)	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>	Grosbeak Weaver	??
1144 (1366)	<i>Euplectes gierowii</i>	Black Bishop	??
1150 (1363)	<i>Euplectes orix</i>	Southern Red Bishop	R
1171 (1326)	<i>Ploceus jacksoni</i>	Golden-backed Weaver	R
1176 (1336)	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	Black-necked Weaver	R
1189 (1342)	<i>Ploceus xanthops</i>	Holub's Golden Weaver	R
1208 (1307)	<i>Petronia pyrgita</i>	Yellow-throated Petronia	R
1214 (1443)	<i>Vidua fischeri</i>	Straw-tailed Whydah	R
1226 (1418)	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	Waxbill	R
1229 (1417)	<i>Estrilda melanotis</i>	Yellow-bellied Waxbill	??
1263 (1433)	<i>Uraeginthus ianthinogaster</i>	Purple Grenadier	R
1264 (1402)	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>	Cut-throat	??
1269 (1383)	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	Silver-bill	R
1280 (1459)	<i>Serinus atrogularis</i>	Yellow-rumped Seed-eater	R
1293 (1450)	<i>Serinus sulphuratus</i>	Brimstone Canary	R

In addition, the following species have been positively identified since 1966:

132 (180)	<i>Melierax metabates</i>	Dark Chanting Goshawk	R
262 (298)	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Common Snipe	M
264 (300)	<i>Gallinago nigripennis</i>	African Snipe	M
1020 (1099)	<i>Nilaus afer nigrotemporalis</i>	Brubru	??

CHANGES IN THE RELATIVE ABUNDANCE OF SPECIES IN THE VICINITY OF TABORA TOWN SINCE 1966

Species recorded around Tabora in 1978-81 were given the qualitative ranking of status explained above. Species were said to have changed their status when they differed from that given in Reynolds' list, except where a species changed

from 'O' or '?' status to unrecorded, or the converse. As in Reynolds' original work, the status refers to within 20 miles (32km) of Tabora town. In this non-quantitative approach, due allowance should be made for subjectivity in ranking.

The following species may be said to have increased in frequency of observation:

	1959-1966	1978-1981
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> Greater Cormorant	no records	R
<i>Ardea goliath</i> Goliath Heron	O	F
<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i> Open-billed Stork	O	F
<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i> Hadada	O	F
<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i> White-faced Whistling Duck	O	F
<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i> Southern Pochard	O	F
<i>Nettapus auritus</i> African Pygmy Goose	F	R
<i>Circus ranivorus</i> African Marsh Harrier	M	R
<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i> Harrier Hawk	O	M
<i>Circaetus cinereus</i> Brown Snake Eagle	O	OM
<i>Accipiter minullus</i> Little Sparrowhawk	no records	R+
<i>Hieraaetus spilogaster</i> African Hawk Eagle	no records	R
<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i> Long-crested Eagle	no records	M
<i>Macheiramphus alcinus</i> Bat Hawk	no records	R
<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i> Grey Kestrel	no records	F
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i> Common Moorhen	no records	R
<i>Fulica cristata</i> Red-knobbed Coot	O	R
<i>Vanellus crassirostris</i> Long-toed Plover	O	R
<i>Vanellus lugubris</i> Senegal Plover	M	F
<i>Apus apus</i> Eurasian Swift	no records	M
<i>Anthreptes longuemarei</i> Violet-backed Sunbird	no records	F
<i>Nectarinia amethystina</i> Amethyst Sunbird	no records	F
<i>Ambylospiza albifrons</i> Grosbeak Weaver	no records	B?M
<i>Estrilda astrild</i> Waxbill	no records	R
<i>Lonchura malabarica</i> Silver-bill	no records	R
<i>Serinus sulphuratus</i> Brimstone Canary	no records	R

The following species may be said to have decreased in frequency of observation:

	1959-1966	1978-1981
<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i> Egyptian Goose	F	O
<i>Buteo buteo</i> Common Buzzard	OM	no records
<i>Numenius arquata</i> Curlew	OM	no records
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i> Whimbrel	OM	no records
<i>Tringa totanus</i> Redshank	OM	no records
<i>Calidris minuta</i> Little Stint	M	no records
<i>Limosa limosa</i> Black-tailed Godwit	OM	no records
<i>Himantopus himantopus</i> Black-winged Stilt	F	O
<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i> Painted Snipe	F	O
<i>Glareola pratincola</i> Common Pratincole	F	O
<i>Oena capensis</i> Namaqua Dove	OB	no records
<i>Halcyon albiventris</i> Brown-hooded Kingfisher	R	O
<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i> Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher	R+	no records
<i>Ispidina picta</i> Pygmy Kingfisher	R+	no records
<i>Tockus deckeni</i> Von der Decken's Hornbill	F	??
<i>Smithornis capensis</i> African Broadbill	B	no records
<i>Delichon urbica</i> House Martin	OM	no records

	1959-1966	1978-1981
<i>Luscinia luscinia</i> Sprosser	M	no records
<i>Oenanthe pileata</i> Capped Wheatear	B?M	??
<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i> Great Reed Warbler	M	no records
<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> Sedge Warbler	M	no records
<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i> Grey-backed Camaroptera	R+	no records
<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> Blackcap	OM	no records
<i>Sylvia borin</i> Garden Warbler	M	no records
<i>Sylvia communis</i> Whitethroat	OM	no records
<i>Motacilla flava</i> Yellow Wagtail	M	no records
<i>Lanius collaris</i> Fiscal	R	no records
<i>Malaconotus sulfureopectus</i> Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike	R	0
<i>Creatophora cinerea</i> Wattled Starling	M	0
<i>Pseudonigrita arnaudi</i> Grey-headed Social Weaver	R+	no records
<i>Passer eminibey</i> Chestnut Sparrow	M	no records
<i>Estrilda erythronotus</i> Black-cheeked Waxbill	R	no records

DISCUSSION

Bearing in mind the non-quantitative nature of the data, a number of remarks can be made. Of those species that have apparently increased in status, there has been a general increase in the number of species favouring permanent marsh. Of these, the Pygmy Goose, Common Moorhen and Red-knobbed Coot have apparently become breeding residents. Most of these records come from Kazima Dam near Tabora, which is no longer the town's main water supply and is comparatively undisturbed. This dam is shallow and well vegetated, in contrast to the larger Igombe Dam where the Greater Cormorant is recorded but few of the marshland species are present.

The increase in the variety of birds of prey observed is striking. Some species are migratory whilst others are apparently breeding residents.

A few passerine species generally associated in the region with undisturbed *miombo* woodland have recently been recorded close to Tabora, notably the Violet-backed and Amethyst Sunbirds. The locations of these observations tends to suggest that the regenerating *miombo* to the immediate east of the town is responsible.

Finally, a species remarkable for its expansion is the Silver-bill, although it is confined to areas with *Acacia*-dominated vegetation, particularly on seasonally poorly drained sites. This is especially interesting in view of the apparent contraction in range of a number of species with similar habitat preferences. This is discussed below.

The principal feature of the list of species that have apparently declined in status is the big reduction in the numbers and variety of Palearctic migrants, particularly mud-flat feeding waders, and warblers. Perhaps this may be explained partly by habitat reductions as Kazima Dam gradually vegetates and cover declines in Tabora with the destruction of gardens for *shambas*, together with increased burning.

The reasons for the decline in kingfisher numbers are not known, but it is interesting to note that all three species are on the edge of their range in the region.

Several species commonly observed in the region in open *Acacia*-dominated bushland have declined northwards. These are the Namaqua Dove, Silverbird, Chestnut Sparrow, Grey-headed Social Weaver and Wattled Starling. These and other apparently regional residents, the Mourning Dove, Fischer's Lovebird, Red and Yellow Barbet, Grey Flycatcher, Karamoja Apalis, Straw-tailed Whydah,

Purple Grenadier, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu and the Superb and Ashy Starlings, are the main representatives of a species shift in bird populations, reflecting the major vegetation change from *miombo*, in the relatively moist south and west, to the dry bushland country of the northeast. Some of these species reach as far south as Tabora, as once did five species recorded by Reynolds. These are the Spotted Morning Thrush, Speckle-fronted Weaver and the Paradise and Steel-blue Whydahs. It would be interesting to note any future changes in the status of these species around Tabora.

REFERENCE

REYNOLDS, J.F. 1968. Notes on birds observed in the vicinity of Tabora, Tanzania with special reference to breeding data. *Journal of the East Africa Natural History Society and National Museum* 157: 1-24.

R.K. Walton, 31 Watchester Avenue, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 0EU, UK.

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